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[*From Blackwood's Magazine.*]

ALISON'S HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

All memoirs of the French Revolution have, to us, an inexpressible interest. The rapidity, force, and vastness of its machinery, fill the mind with a sense of power unexampled in the tardy and simple contrivances of earlier overthrow. Evil as it was, it had a daring grasp, a remorseless violence, and an untameable fury, that transport us at once out of the ancient courses of human guilt, and bring the mind within view of shapes and thoughts that seem the denizens of a darker world. If the imagination of some great master of the pencil or the pen were to be tasked to bring the spirits that "minister to human mischief" before the eye, and if that master were Raphael, or Shakspeare himself, we scarcely know where he could find more living resemblance of the demon than in the Robespierres and Dantons, the Barreres and the Napoleons; in the chill countenances and fiery hearts, the calm and calculating malignity and the rabid thirst of blood; the haughty contempt of human agonies, and the godless and defying arrogance with which they went forth on their way to delusive and unsubstantial power, trampling on altars and thrones.

The high approbation with which the public have received the preceding volumes of Mr. Alison's History of the French Revolution, relieves us at once from all appearance of partiality, and from all necessity for panegyric. No work could have made such progress in national opinion without substantial qualities. Its vigor of research and its manliness of principle, its accurate knowledge and its animation of style, have been the grounds of its remarkable public favor, as they are the guarantees for its permanent popularity. The present volume, the sixth of the series, advances in interest. The importance of its transactions may be estimated from the fact, that the two years which this volume comprehends, actually formed the pivot on which all the mighty events since their dates have turned; that they exhibited at once the midnight and the dawn of European liberty, the most boundless triumph of the universal oppressor, and the commencement of assured deliverance; the laying of the heaviest fetter on the neck of mankind, and the striking of that first great blow by which the civilized world was to be redeemed. The battles of Austerlitz in 1805, and of Jena in 1806, had destroyed the resistance of central Europe. The military reputation of Austria had been broken on the field, but a more condign calamity had fallen on Prussia. Her military existence had been extinguished. In the history of national overthrow, there never had been until that day so disastrous, desperate, and crushing a result of a single battle. It was yet to have but one rival, that illustrious encounter in which the author of the ruin of Prussia was to be buried in the ruins of his tyrannical and infidel empire by the genius of Wellington and the hand of England. Prussia was destroyed in all the attributes that form a civilized power. Her brilliant army was scattered in a day like a mist before a whirlwind. All her great fortresses fell at a summons, all her provinces were overrun, all her revenues confiscated, all her laws abolished;—yesterday she was an independent kingdom, to-day she was a vassal province; yesterday she was a great European power, taking on herself the restoration of Europe, and anticipating the triumphant struggle of its enemy—to-day she was prostrate, a prisoner, and a slave, with her armor hewn from her, her strength dismembered, and her hopes in the grave of her gallant soldiery; yesterday she was Prussia, to-day she was France.

It is difficult to account for the distinction of the calamities in Austria and Prussia, without looking to some higher source than the fortunes of war. Among the many merits of Mr. Alison's History, we regard it as the most original and the most important, that he writes with the feelings of a Christian. No historian has ever been more free from the mawkishness of sentiment or the sanctimony of phrase, which have been so unfortunately affected by writers calling themselves Christian, taking a learned yet unlabored view of the mere human motives. He investigates with pious, yet manly dignity, the sources of events in those loftier councils from which all things come, to which the Christian alone can look, and to which the Christian alone can pay the reverence due. Those feelings predominate throughout the entire of these volumes. The French Revolution itself was but a great development of Providential design, and no historian could do justice to it except the man who acknowledged a Providence as the supreme arbiter of human things. Going at least to the full extent of Mr. Alison's impressions on those subjects, we cannot look back upon the French triumphs in Austria, Prussia, and Russia, but in the sense of unconscious agencies of a vast plan of retributive justice, and we think that we can discover even in the more minute features of the vengeance, something proportionate to the peculiar offences of the sufferers. In the history of the Continent, no act of kingly treachery, fraud, and blood, had ever rivalled the partition of Poland. It combined at once the characters of all that we hate and despise; it had the meanness of political swindling, the fury of national rapine, and the atrocity of military massacre. The great offender was Prussia—Austria and Russia were only the accomplices. The perfidy, subtlety, and merciless appetite for possession which characterised the conduct of Frederic II., made him the tempter, and would have been not unworthy of the original tempter of mankind. The conspirator kingdoms entered with fatal readiness into the temptation, and were deeply punished, but it was upon the serpent that the curse fell. Prussia had long owed a desperate compensation to Europe. Frederic, infidel himself, had been the great patron of European infidelity. His encouragement of the French sciolists had made infidelity fashionable amongst the higher ranks of the Continent. Philosophy and religion were declared to be one, and the Atheism of the French Revolution was the poisoned cup prepared by the hands of the Prussian king. In due season justice was done, and France, maddened into preternatural strength by the draught, revenged her frenzy upon his kingdom.

Thus, while Austria was humbled by the defeat of her armies and the capture of Vienna, and Russia was assailed on her own frontier, and compelled to purchase victory by the sacrifice of her ancient capital, neither power was utterly prostrated. Both bled from countless wounds; but their blood was that of gallant warriors, shed in desperate encounter, and, even in the moment of defeat, retaining vigor for future victory. But the wounds of Prussia were all but mortal; the sword was exchanged only for the lash, and she was compelled not so much to follow the conqueror as a captive, as to drag his chariot in the harness of a slave. Her restoration after so total a fall was one of the most remarkable events in the annals of fallen nations. This was the punishment for the guilty partition of Poland.

It is equally remarkable that treachery to Poland seems to have been among the immediate sources of the fall of Napoleon. He unquestionably excited them into a resistance which left them at the mercy of their masters, wasted a vast quantity of the national blood, and finally abandoned them to utter hopelessness of national independence. What renders all this still more extraordinary is, that this vast machinery of retribution was set in motion to avenge the ruin of a people who had long been the most fallen of Europe—powerless at home, ineffectual abroad, wasting away by intestine feud, and apparently preserved from the grave only by the contemptuous negligence of Europe.

Was it for the purpose of showing that Providence will not suffer its high laws to be insulted in the instance of the most insignificant nation; and that, while it leaves the chief punishments or rewards of individuals to another state of existence, it enforces its high moral on kingdoms by the promptitude of its visitations in this world?

It is now known to us, that the fate of Poland long exercised Napoleon's most anxious deliberation; that she offered him her perpetual alliance as the price of her independence—her army, her whole military population, all the resources of a nation of sixteen millions of men, against Russia, with whom he was on the verge of war—against Austria, whom he was determined to keep down at the risk of war—and against Prussia, whose crown he had cast under his feet, and had determined to keep there. It is equally known that Napoleon wavered; that he was anxious to secure the force of Poland, but equally anxious to escape the jealousy of Austria. In other words, that he was determined to gain what advantages he could from both, and to cheat both in return.

Mr. Alison thinks that his reasons for refusing independence to Poland were solid. With all deference to his judgment, the general European opinion seems to have been on the contrary side. It was unquestionably the impression, at the period of the Moscow retreat, that if Napoleon had spent the year 1812 in reorganizing Poland, and shaping her into the form of a great European kingdom, he would have been enabled to fall on Russia with a force altogether irresistable. In 1812, what could he fear from Austria, along whose frontier he was moving with an army thrice the strength of that which had conquered her but six years before? From Prussia, what could he fear? She was his magazine, his treasury, his barrack, and his high-road. The whole force of Poland was ready to take arms at his bidding, and to take arms with a more ardent enthusiasm, and a more resolute sincerity, than any other allies that the world could offer. He might have thus marched with a hundred thousand additional cavalry, the most fitting for Russian warfare of any in Europe, uniting the wild impetuosity of the Tartar with the disciplined steadiness of the European, and exerting both against the enemy with a fiery recollection of ancient hostility and immediate wrongs. If there were difficulties connected with the habitual insubordination of Poland, what man on earth was fitter to deal with those difficulties than Napoleon—the man who had reduced the turbulence of the German sovereignties into implicit submission,—the man who, by a still more singular effort of his genius, had reduced the republicanism of France into obedience,—combined the explosive materials of the great rebellion at home into the manageable yet resistless material of power abroad, and seizing the fiery spirits of anarchy in their full vigor, forced them to labor at the erection of a throne, which, with all the power, had all the splendor of necromancy? Even the delay of six months in Poland would have brought him into a period of the year which alone was fit for warlike operations in the north—would have given him time to seize both the two capitals of North and South Russia—and, with Moscow and St. Petersburg, whether in, his hands or in ashes, would have forced Alexander to sign a ruinous peace, or have driven him into his deserts, never to reascend the Russian throne, or have a Russian throne to reascend.

And these opinions are not now stated for the first time; they were the universal language of the period; they were the language of his own camp, of his council of officers, and even of himself. But his time was come. If ever a spirit of delusion was commissioned for the undoing of a mighty criminal, it took possession in that hour of the heart of the French Emperor. A precipitation, of which he afterwards could not speak without astonishment, became the principle of all his actions. All prudence was cast behind; all remonstrance was unavailing; he plunged into the Russian campaign on the verge of winter; rushed just deep enough into the country to be incapable of resource if fortune failed, threw his last stake, and from that instant was undone.

Napoleon's middle course, with respect to Poland, was the more remarkable from its being a direct contradiction to his supreme maxim of policy, never to do things by halves. He determined to inflame to the utmost point of indignation the Polish provinces which belonged to Prussia, to be cautious in his addresses to those which belonged to Russia, and to pass by the Austrian share of the partition in silence. The result was, that he finally disgusted the whole nation; and the people, sinking at once from enthusiasm, through the whole scale, to suspicion, began to ask whether the restoration of Poland could rationally be expected from the hand which had paralyzed the liberties of France?

The war with Russia was begun. Alexander, till now an auxiliary, was become a principal; and for the first time in the history of modern Europe, the grand trial was to be made between the strength of the West and the North. The conflict had almost the interest of a great dramatic representation; the dashing intrepidity, fierce enterprise, and splendid discipline of the armies of France, was on one side; on the other, the stern fortitude, iron perseverance, and desperate determination of the army of Russia. The leaders on both sides, exhibited an equal and an extraordinary contrast. Napoleon, the very genius of war, subtle, profound, rapid, with an instinctive love of battle; magnificent in his conceptions, merciless in their execution, seeing nothing too lofty or too deep to deter him, consumed with a passion for universal empire, and already crowned with the laurels of unrivalled victories. Alexander, brave, calm, and patriotic, compensating for his inexperience in war by the sincerity of his intentions; for the narrowness of his military resources, by the vastness of his territory; and possessing against all the casualities of fortune that noblest of all courage which is to be found in the righteous cause. Yet it is a remarkable instance of the neglect which often enfeebles the highest councils of man, that this great empire, on the very point of the most desperate of all struggles, could muster but seventy-five thousand men to meet Napoleon, who, at the distance of six hundred miles from France, with all Germany to keep at bay, and with a multitude of corps employed in guarding the communications of this immense line, was yet able to bring a hundred thousand veterans to the Vistula.

The first great action by which the contending forces were tried, was the battle of Pultusk. Among Mr. Alison's qualities for an historian, one of the most admirable is the spirit of his military descriptions. Of this we now give a slight example:—

"The position of Pultusk is the only one in that country where the ground is so far cleared of wood as to permit of any considerable armies combating each other in a proper field of battle. An open and cultivated plain on this side of the river Narew, there stretches out to the south and east of that town, which lies on the banks of its meandering stream—a succession of thickets surround this open space in all directions, excepting that on which the town lies; and on the inside of them the ground rises to a semicircular ridge, from whence it gradually slopes down towards the town on one side, and the forest on the other; so that it is impossible, till this barrier is surmounted, to get a glimpse even of the buildings. There, the Russians were drawn up in admirable order in two lines; their left resting on the town of Pultusk, their right on the wood of Mozyn, which skirted the little plain, the artillery in advance; but a cloud of Cossacks swarmed in front of the array, and prevented either the force or composition of the enemy from being seen by the French as they advanced to the attack. Sacken had the command of the left; Count Osterman Tolstoy of the right; Barclay de Tolly, with twelve battalions and ten squadrons, occupied a copsewood in front of the right; Benningsen was stationed in the centre—names destined to immortal celebrity in future wars, and which, even at this distant period, the historian can hardly enumerate without a feeling of exultation and the thrilling interest of former days."

In this campaign, we are not to forget that it was fought in the depth of winter—December, 1806—that too of a northern winter; and, if any conceivable addition could be made to the severity of the elements, that it was a winter in Poland, a vast northern table-land swept by the wind direct from the pole, almost wholly a wilderness, naked of human habitation, and divided between marsh, impracticable forest, and plains as barren as the wilds of Scythia;—that it was to these hideous solitudes that Napoleon brought the gay and glittering battalions of the south, to struggle against the inclement sky, the frozen ground, and the Russian steel. Dearly did France pay for her triumphs, but such are the prices which ambition must pay for supremacy.

On the 26th of December, Marshal Lannes, at the head of five-and-thirty thousand men, advanced to the attack. "The woods which skirted the little plain occupied by the Russian light troops in front of their position, were forced by the French voltigeurs, after an obstinate resistance, and a battery which galled their advance, and which could not be withdrawn, carried by assault; but no sooner had Lannes, encouraged by this success, surmounted the crest of the ridge, and advanced into the open plain, than the cloud of Cossacks dispersed to the right and left, and exposed to view the Russian army in two lines in admirable order, with a hundred and twenty guns disposed along its front. Astonished, but not panic-struck, by so formidable an opposition, Lannes still continued to press forward; and as his divisions successively cleared the thickets, and advanced to the crest of the hill, they deployed into line. This operation, performed under the fire of all the Russian cannon, to which the French had as yet none of equal number to oppose, was executed with admirable discipline, but attended with a very heavy loss, and the ground was already strewed with dead bodies, when the line was so far formed as to enable a general charge to take place. It was attended, however, with very little success; the soil, cut up by the passage of so many horses and carriages, was in many places knee-deep of mud; heavy snow-showers at intervals obscured the heavens and deprived the French gunners of the sight of the enemy, while the Russian batteries, in position, and served with admirable skill, alike in light and darkness, sent their fatal storm of grape and round shot through the ranks of the assailants. Notwithstanding these obstacles, however, the French advanced with their wonted intrepidity to the attack, and gradually the arrival of their successive batteries rendered the fire of cannon on the opposite sides more equal. Suchet, who commanded the first line, insensibly gained ground, especially on the right, where the division of Barclay was stationed; but Benningsen, seeing the danger, reinforced that gallant officer with fresh troops. A battalion of the French infantry was broken and cut to pieces by the Russian horse, and the rout in that quarter became so serious that Lannes was compelled to advance in person with his reserve to repair the disorder. By these efforts the forward movement of the Russians in that direction was arrested, and their victorious columns, charged in flank while disordered by the rapidity of their advance, were forced to give ground, and resume their former position in front of Pultusk."

The great battle of the campaign was now approaching, the battle of Prussich-Eylau.

"By daybreak the French army, headed by Murat, with his numerous and terrible dragoons, were in motion to pursue the enemy; and as the Russians had been much retarded during the night by the passage of so many pieces of cannon and waggons through the narrow streets of Junkowo, they soon came up with their rear-guard. By overwhelming numbers, the Russians were forced from the bridge of Bergfried; but they rallied in the village, and forming barricades with tumbrils, waggons, and chariots, effectually checked the advance of the enemy, until the carriages in the rear had got clear through, when they retired, obstinately contesting every inch of ground, which they did with such effect that the French lost fifteen hundred men in the pursuit, without inflicting a greater loss on their adversaries. Nor were any cannon or chariots taken—a striking proof of the orderly nature of the retreat, and the heroism with which the rear-guard performed its duty, when it is recollected that Napoleon, with eighty thousand men, thundered in close pursuit; and that, from the state of the roads, the march which had been ordered upon three lines, could take place on two only. Soult and Davoust continued to manœuvre, in order to turn the Russian left, while Murat and Ney passed their rear-guard. On the night of the 4th, the Russians retired to Frauendorf, where they stood firm next day. But this continued retreat in presence of the enemy was now beginning to be attended with bad effects, both upon the health and spirits of the soldiers. The Russian commissariat was then wretched; magazines there were none in the country which was now the theatre of war; and the soldiers, when worn out with a night-march over frozen snow, had no means of obtaining subsistence but by prowling about to discover and dig up the little stores which the peasants had buried for the use of their families. The men every where lay on the bare ground in intense frost, with no other bed but the snow, and no covering but their greatcoats, which were now little better than rags. They were not as yet inured to retire before the enemy; and the murmur against any farther retreat was so loud, that Benningsen resolved to fall back only to a chosen field of battle; and, upon examining the map, that of Prussich-Eylau was selected for this purpose. No sooner was this announced to the troops, than their discontents were appeased, the hardships of the night-marches were forgotten, and from the joyful looks of the men, it would rather have been supposed they were marching to tranquil winter-quarters, than the most desperate struggle which had occurred in modern times."

The partial encounters which preceded this great battle showed that Napoleon was contending with a new enemy. His course through the Italian campaigns had been one of unrivalled superiority. His encounters with the troops of Austria had only augmented the number of his victories. The Prussian army, with the highest military reputation of Europe, had fallen at a blow. It would perhaps be unfair to charge the men of those countries with deficiency of nerve, but nothing can be clearer than that the Russians encountered Napoleon with a different spirit, as with a different success. In the Russian war we see no battle lost by mere manœuvre, no disgraceful flight at the first sight of an enemy on the flank, no columns of prisoners carried off, no capitulations of armies, no scandalous surrender of towns, even no cannon captured, but where they were sunk in morasses in the dreadful winter-marches of the troops, and no banners taken but where their defenders had fallen on the field.

"Never," says Mr. Alison, "in the history of war did two armies pass a night under more awful and impressive circumstances than the rival hosts who now lay, without tent or covering, on the snowy expanse of the field of Eylau. The close vicinity of the two armies, the vast multitude assembled in so narrow a space, intent only on mutual destruction; the vital interests to the lives and fortunes of all which were at stake; the wintry wildness of the scene, cheered only by the watch-fires, which threw a partial glow on the snow-clad heights around; the shivering groups who in either army lay round the blazing fires, chilled by girdles of impenetrable ice; the stern resolution of the soldiers in the one array, and the enthusiastic ardor of those in the other; the liberty of Europe now brought to the issue of one dread combat; the glory of Russia and France dependent on the efforts of the mightiest armament that either had yet sent forth, all contributed to impress a feeling of extraordinary solemnity, which reached the most inconsiderate breast, oppressed the mind with a feeling of anxious thought, and kept unclosed many a weary eyelid in both camps, notwithstanding the extraordinary fatigues of the preceding days. But no sooner did the dawn break, and the quick rattle of musketry from the outposts commence, than these gloomy presentiments were dispelled, and all arose from their icy beds with no other feelings but those of joyous confidence and military ardor."

LIGHT HOUSES OF THE BLACK SEA—*Constantinople, Jan.* 3.—The Turkish Gazette contains the following remarkable article: 'As the light-houses that stand at the entrance of the Black Sea are built in the ancient fashion, and many ships, both national and foreign, cannot discern their light in stormy weather, and consequently suffer shipwreck, his Highness, who constantly has in view the promotion of the safety of his subjects, has expressed his desire that larger light-houses, and quay river lights, like those in Europe, shall be built in such a manner, that light be visible at the distance of 20 or 25 miles; that those of Tenes Bagdchessie and Ahor Kajue shall be improved and repaired; and lastly, that two entirely new ones shall be erected at the entrance of the Black Sea (sea of Marmora.) The Capt. Pacha, to whom the execution of these orders is confided, is already engaged in carrying them into effect. To defray the annual expense, a certain toll shall be imposed on all ships that pass through according to the practice of European countries.'

POLICE.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21.

A Pickle.—Misther Barney O'Nealy, a jintleman from over the water, was caught yesterday morning with a barrel of salted codfish, and a basket of that same, and it did not appear how he came into lawful possession of the articles in question. Misther Barney was anxious to clear that point. 'I've tuk 'em,' said he, 'from McCar, sure, and I saults the fishes myself—I'm a merchant in that line, any how.' Unfortunately for Misther Barney's blarney, another merchant claimed 'them same' fishes, and that was Mr. Elisha Baker, residing at the corner of Beekman and Front streets, and so Misther Barney was sent where he will have other fish to fry.

Distressing Case.—Jane Waters, a young girl nineteen years of age, was charged with obtaining a piece of calico, value $3 87, from the store of John G. Vreedenburgh, 168 Chatham street. She acknowledged the theft, and said in extenuation, that her father is dead, and that she is living with her mother, who is in great distress. She begged hard to be let off, but was committed.

A New Pawn Shop.—'I want to spake a word wid his honor,' said a tall, plump, florid daughter of green Erin, to Justice Bloodgood, as she advanced to the desk, carrying in her arms a young childer, and sobbing for dear life.

What do you want of me?

I want yer honor to take up a young woman, a friend of mine, and kape her.

What for?

She's been salting me.

What, you've been quarrelling, I suppose?

Yis, and she bated me intirely, and I want a warrint.

Go along, don't be foolish.

Won't you give me a warrint?

A warrant costs six shillings. I'm sure you can't afford to spend six shillings so foolishly; take my advice, go away.

Sure, I've got no six shillings, but here's me shawl, I'll pawn it to yer honor.

Do what!

Pawn it, and here's me bonnet, it is'nt much battered; its worth six shillings, sure.

This ain't no pawn shop, go away. Here officer, take this woman out.

Exit woman and childer.

The Knickerbocker, in a notice to correspondents, has the following:

'*Trials of a Schoolmaster*,' is, in some respects, a very good paper: but its tedious episode, and extreme length, spoil it for our purpose. The descriptions of the school-house—the first punishment—and the evening spelling-school, though too minute, show the hand of a close observer, and an accurate limner. We extract the following dialogue, which lives, we think, in our memory. Still, it may have originated with 'T. D. M.'

Master. 'Boys,—Noah had three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japhet. Now who was the father of Noah's three sons?'

(The boys of the 'third class' pause—look dubiously at their teacher—but there is no reply.)

Master. 'What! can't you tell? Let me illustrate. Here is Mr. Smith, our next door neighbor; he has three sons, John, James, and Joseph Smith. Now who is the father of John, James, and Joseph Smith?'

Boys. (Although in eager, emulous strife,) 'Mr. Smith.'

Master. 'Certainly!—that's correct. Well, now let us turn to the first question. *Noah* had three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japhet. Now who was the father of *Noah's* three sons?'

Boys. (Unanimously, after a little hesitation,) *Mr. Smith!*'

A late Dublin magazine has a story somewhat akin to this, save the teacher and pupil were alike thick-headed. An Irish tutor is examining a lad in Scripture History:

Tut. 'Is there any account given in Scripture, Phelim, of a dumb baste speaking?'

Lad. 'Yes.'

Tut. 'What dumb baste was it that spake?'

Lad. 'It was a whale!'

Tut. 'Yes. To whom did the whale speak?'

Lad. 'To Moses, in the bull-rushes!'

Tut. 'True. What did the whale say to Moses in the bull-rushes?'

Lad. 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!'

Tut. 'Very well. What was Moses' reply?'

Lad. 'Thou art the man!'

Could there be anything more broadly burlesque than this?

INDIAN SERANADE.—Awake! flower of the forest—beautiful bird of the prairie.

Awake! awake! thou with the eyes of the fawn. When you look at me I am happy, like the flowers when they fee' the dew.

The breath of thy mouth is as sweet as the fragrance of flowers in the morning—sweet as their fragrance at evening, in the moon of the fading leaf.

Does not the blood of my veins spring towards thee, like the bubbling springs to the sun, in the moon of the bright nights! [April.]

My heart sings to thee when thou art near, like the dancing branches to the wind, in the moon of strawberries! [June.]

When thou art not pleased, my beloved, my heart is darkened, like the shining river when shadows fall from above.

Thy smiles cause my troubled heart to be brightened, as the sun makes to look like gold the ripples which the cold wind has created.

Myself! behold me! blood of my beating heart.

The earth smiles—the waters smile—the heavens smile, but I—I lose the way of smiling, when thou art not here—awake! awake! my beloved.

Rather Tart.—As Lady Mary Montague was walking through the gardens at Stow with a party, she was much annoyed by an impertinent young coxcomb, who was continually making some foolish observations to her. On coming to one of the temples, over which there was an inscription, she took advantage of this opportunity to expose his ignorance and put him to silence.

'Pray, sir,' said she, 'be kind enough to explain that inscription to us.'

'I really do not know what it means, for I see it is dog Latin.'

'How very extraordinary it is,' said Lady Mary, 'that puppies do not understand their own language!'